Weekly Compilation of

Presidential Documents

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Editor's Note: The President was at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on January 9, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Statement on Representative Ralph M. Hall's Joining the Republican Party

January 2, 2004

I welcome Congressman Ralph Hall to the Republican Party. Ralph is a close friend of the Bush family. He is a well-respected leader of the highest integrity and a tireless advocate for the people of Texas. We have worked closely together on the important challenges facing our Nation. I strongly support his reelection.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

January 3, 2004

Good morning. Two years ago this month, I signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, the most important reform of public education in a generation.

In that landmark law, we made our expectations clear: Every child in America will learn to read, write, add, and subtract at grade level. Schools are now required to test children regularly to make sure students are learning and that schools are teaching well.

And when schools do not show progress toward high standards, we're giving parents better options, including tutoring for their children or a transfer to a better public school. Above all, the No Child Left Behind Act required a change in attitude from the educators and public officials responsible for our schools.

We will no longer write off some children as hopeless. We will no longer accept or excuse schools that do not effectively teach the basics. We will insist on high standards and accountability because we believe that every school should teach and every child can learn.

For the past 24 months, schools and State Governments have been putting the new reforms into action. All 50 States, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, have drawn up plans to hold every public school accountable for student achievement. We're measuring results. We're giving teachers the information they need to improve instruction and giving parents new options to help their children when schools do not measure up.

We have recently received test results that show America's children are making progress. In 2003, math scores for fourth graders nationwide were nine points higher than in 2000. Math scores for eighth graders improved by five points. And a higher percentage of fourth graders tested at or above their grade level in reading.

To mark the anniversary of the No Child Left Behind Act, I will travel this coming week to schools in St. Louis, Missouri, and Knoxville, Tennessee. Children at these schools once struggled, but in recent years, they have risen to meet our new standards. Their example shows that high expectations, a commitment to measuring achievement, and a belief in every child can change lives and turn schools around.

Some critics have objected to these reforms because they believe our expectations are too high or that it is unfair to hold all students to the same standards regardless of background or that we're punishing schools that are not making progress. But the time for excuses has passed. Our reforms insist on high standards because we know every child can learn. Our reforms call for testing because the worst discrimination is to ignore a school's failure to teach every child. And our reforms identify underperforming schools because we need to direct our help to the schools that need it most.

In 2003, we provided $234 million to assist the lowest performing schools that need the most improvement. In 2004, we plan to more than double that amount. We have increased

Federal funding for elementary and high school education from about $25 billion in 2001 to more than $33 billion in 2003, an increase of about 36 percent and the highest level ever.

We've committed $1.8 billion in grants to help train tens of thousands of teachers to use effective reading instruction methods and materials. We expect schools to do their job, and we're helping them to do their job. So there's no excuse for failure. When we set a high standard, we are showing our belief in the capacities of every child. And when we prepare them to meet a high standard, we're giving them a better chance in life. High expectations set children on a path to success. I'm pleased to report that the No Child Left Behind Act is helping put more of America's children on that path, so they succeed in school and in life.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:55 a.m. on January 2 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 3. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 2 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Afghanistan's Adoption of a New Constitution

January 4, 2004

I congratulate the people of Afghanistan on the adoption of their new constitution. This document lays the foundation for democratic institutions and provides a framework for national elections in 2004. A democratic Afghanistan will serve the interests and just aspirations of all of the Afghan people and help ensure that terror finds no further refuge in that proud land. This new constitution marks a historic step forward, and we will continue to assist the Afghan people as they build a free and prosperous future.

Remarks in a Discussion at Pierre Laclede Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri

January 5, 2004

The President. Well, I'm glad to be here, Madam Principal. [*Laughter*] One of the things you find in a successful school is a strong-willed, smart, capable principal. And that's obviously the case here, and I appreciate your hospitality.

I'm here at Laclede because this is a school that has defied expectations. It's defied expectations by raising the bar and believing that every child can learn. That's not the case in some parts of our country, unfortunately. In some parts of the country, schools just shuffle kids through, and that's not right. That's not the American way.

This school is a school that has performed, you have to say, brilliantly. Since 1999, 7 percent of the kids could read, and now 80 percent can read at grade level in the third grade. That speaks to strong principals; it speaks to really good teachers. It says this school has got teachers that believe in the capability of every child. It says the school has raised standards and is not afraid to measure.

And see, one of the things I'm here to talk about is the No Child Left Behind Act. Laclede has been named a No Child Left—Blue Ribbon No Child Left Behind School. And the—inherent in this No Child Left Behind Act is the desire to spend Federal money and spend it wisely. We've increased budgets. The Title I money is up 43 percent since 2001—41 percent. The teacher training money is up. The reading program money is up by 4 times. But finally, the Federal Government has said, "Why don't you show us whether or not that money is being well-spent. Show us whether or not you believe every child can learn. Show us whether or not objectives are being met."

And this is exactly what's happening here at Laclede. As I was reminded, Laclede was doing this before No Child Left Behind Act was passed. Joyce was quick to point it out.

[*Laughter*] She may point it out again. [*Laughter*]

But the important thing is, inherent in the No Child Left Behind Act was not only the desire to measure, the need to measure, the need to show, the need to track each child, but it's also the trust of local people to make the right decisions. See, you can't have a system that is—meets objectives if you're hamstrung by Federal rules and regulations. And so, inherent in the No Child Left Behind Act is trust, trust of the principals, trust of the teachers, trust of the parents, trust of the local officials, like Speaker Hanaway and Peter Kinder from the State house and State senate who are with us. I want to thank you for coming, by the way.

I appreciate all the State officials who are here. I know we've got some school board officials. You've got the ball in our—in terms of how to achieve excellence. It's up to you. The Federal Government is a source of money. It's now a source of inspiration. It's a source of measurement. But it's up to the local people to really make it work.

I also appreciate so very much that Senator Jim Talent is with us. Senator, thank you for coming. Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson and Kenny Hulshof, and of course, Congressman Lacy Clay, whose district we are in. Congressman, thank you very much for joining us today.

I went into a classroom of fourth graders. I asked this question, I said, "How many of you are going to go to college?" You'll be happy to hear that every hand went up. That's a good sign. They were also doing something that was fundamentally important. They were practicing their reading. I also asked the question, "How many of you read more than you watch TV?" About 50 percent of the hands went up. [*Laughter*]

But what's important is for schools like—around the country to understand what's happening here, and that is that the people here use reading programs based upon what works, not what sounds good, reading programs based upon the science of reading. And it's working.

And so I'm here to congratulate this school and to really hold you up for the Nation to see what is possible when you raise the bar, when you're not afraid to hold people to account, when you empower your teachers and your principals to achieve the objective we all want. And that's to make sure no child, not one single child in America, is left behind.

I'm honored to be here at this Blue Ribbon School. And I appreciate your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

[*At this point, the discussion continued.*]

The President. Yes, you are. Listen, one of the things you hear, of course, is that you can't test kids, see. You can't test. We test too much. How do you know if a child isn't reading if you don't test? How do you know who needs help? I mean, if the idea is to make sure not one child is left behind, you better test.

The test isn't a punishment, you know. It's not to punish anybody. The test is to determine who needs extra help. And that's exactly why Laclede is doing well, I'm convinced, or one of the main reasons why. They've got a book here that says, "Every child matters. Every child can learn, and therefore we're going to measure as to whether or not we're meeting expectations for every child, not a few of the children but every child."

And so when you hear this talk about testing, testing is bad, testing is—you know, teach the test, what testing is—what testing does and what measuring does is determines whether or not every child is learning, and if not, whether that child is getting the help he or she needs early, before it is too late.

We've got to stop this business about just shuffling kids through the schools in America. We've got to stop social promotion and focus on whether or not each child is getting the instruction he or she needs, and that's exactly what this book says, and that's why I'm here at Laclede to tout this program, because you're making great sense.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Yes, I think it's important. The Federal Government can help, and we have. I think we've increased the teacher training and recruitment budget significantly, like by about 40 percent since 2001. And that's important to make sure teachers have the skills necessary to be able to teach. I mean, it's one thing to have a good heart;

it's another thing to be able to have the skills necessary to put—to match the good heart with the capacity to pass on knowledge.

And so the Federal Government is helping on teacher recruitment, teacher training, and that's an important aspect of the No Child Left Behind Act. It's essential that we continue to monitor what works, whether the curriculum you're using makes sense—that's what measurement helps a school to understand—and whether or not a teacher needs a little extra help in order to be able to impart the knowledge that he or she is desirous of doing.

I know we've got a parent here. By the way, the first teacher of any child is a mom and a dad. And it's—this parent right here is a good teacher. Thank you for being here.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Speaking about volunteers, one of the really true strengths of our country is the heart and soul of the American people. Today with us—I met a fellow at the airport who is now with us here today. His name is Jeff Tank. Probably never heard of Jeff. He is a volunteer with Big Brothers and Big Sisters. January happens to be National Mentoring Month.

Where are you, Jeff? There he is. Jeff, by the way, when I went to the airport, he said, "This isn't about recognition, recognizing me." I said, "Yes, it is, because you represent a lot of other good people who are taking time out of your lives to make a difference in a child's life."

Schools need volunteers. Schools need mentors. Big Brothers and Big Sisters is a fabulous program that provides that kind of—that provides that kind of mentoring and help. Whether you're the superintendent of schools or the chairman of the school board or the President, we all need to be out encouraging people to volunteer.

I always say that part of ushering in a era of personal responsibility means that people have to be responsible for the communities—for the schools in the community in which they live. You just can't trust that some faraway Government is going to make the correct decisions for the local communities. And if you're interested in the quality of education and you're paying attention to what you hear at Laclede, why don't you volunteer? Why don't you help and mentor a child how to read? Why don't you join us all in changing America one child at a time?

And so, Jeff, I want to thank you for coming. I want to thank you for the example you have set for others in the community of St. Louis, and hope that others will follow your example. And a great place to start to volunteer is to show up at a local public school and ask the principal what you can do to help change a child's life.

So thank you for reminding me about the importance of being a good mom and a great volunteer as well.

Listen, making sure every child learns to read and making sure every child is educated is a—the number one domestic priority of this country. It is essential we get it right.

Laclede Elementary School shatters stereotypes. It shows that we can have excellence in every single classroom across this country, that it's not just suburban America where we find excellence. You can find excellence in inner-city America. You find excellence in rural America. You find excellence where you've got great principals and teachers and leadership willing to raise the standards, willing to challenge every child, because you believe in every child. You find excellence where you're willing to measure and then correct when things aren't going the way they should. You find excellence when you've got skilled teachers carrying around a book that measures the ability of each child, not a collection of children but every child, and so that you can then qualify the curriculum to meet the needs of that child.

And I am here for the simple reason to show what is possible all across America. And what is possible is to take reading scores from 7 percent to 80 percent in places like St. Louis, Missouri, and elsewhere. I want to congratulate you for setting the standard. And keep raising the bar. Make sure that other 20 percent gets up to grade level at third grade—I know you will—and you will have done your duty as educators and Americans to make sure that our children, the very future of the country, have got the capacity to succeed in the greatest land on the face of the Earth.

Thank you all for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Yolanda Moss, principal, and Regina Davis, parent and volunteer, Pierre Laclede Elementary School; Joyce Roberts, executive director, Middle School and Priority School Education, St. Louis Public Schools, and former principal, Pierre Laclede Elementary School; Catherine Hanaway, speaker, Missouri State house of representatives; and Peter Kinder, president pro tempore, Missouri State senate. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in St. Louis

January 5, 2004

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thank you all. Thanks for your warm welcome. I appreciate such a warm response. I appreciate such a huge crowd. It's great to be back here in St. Louis. I don't know if you know this or not, but my grandmother was raised right here in St. Louis. And I've got a lot of relatives here. By the way, if you're looking for a great uncle, model somebody after Bucky Bush.

This record-setting event really means we're laying the foundation for what is going to be a victory in the State of Missouri in November of 2004 and a nationwide victory in 2004. I want to thank all the event organizers. I want to thank those of you who are in the grassroots. I want to thank you for working hard. I want to thank you for what you're going to do.

The political season is going to come in its own time. I admit I'm loosening up—[*laughter*]—and I'm getting ready. But right now, I'm focused on the people's business. See, I have a lot on the agenda. I want you to remind your fellow citizens that I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

My one regret tonight is that Laura isn't here. She is a fabulous lady. She's a great First Lady for our country. She is a wonderful wife, a great mother, and she's doing a heck of a job on behalf of the American people.

I appreciate so very much Senator Kit Bond's leadership in the United States Senate. I also appreciate a short introduction. [*Laughter*] I also want to thank my friend Senator Jim Talent as well for doing a great job for the people of Missouri. I'm pleased that Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson is with us tonight as well as Kenny Hulshof, two fine Members of the United States Congress from Missouri.

I know the secretary of state is with us, Matt Blunt. Thank you for coming, Matt. I'm proud you're here. I appreciate the speaker coming, Catherine Hanaway, as well as Senate Majority Leader Peter Kinder. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank all the members of the statehouse for being here and the local officials. I'm so honored you take time to come.

I particularly want to thank my friend Sam Fox, who is the State finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. I'm honored that Sam has taken on such a big role, and I appreciate the hard work of Sam and the team he has put together to make this such a strong and successful event. I call him Foxie. Foxie, thanks for your friendship.

I also appreciate Ann Wagner from the great State of Missouri. She's the cochairman of the Republican National Committee. I'm proud to have her friendship and proud to have her support here as the chairman of the party in Missouri.

I want to thank Ambassador Steve Brauer and his wife, Kimmy. By the way, they did a fabulous job representing our country overseas, and I want to thank them for their hard work at this event.

I know my friend former Senator Jack Danforth is here. I named him to a special mission, to be the envoy to the Sudan, and he has done incredibly good work in that war-ravaged country. I appreciate your service, Jack, and your friendship.

But most of all, I thank you all for coming. It lifts my spirits to see so many people here. It is—it gives me great confidence that we're on the path to victory, to know that I've got such broad support in this important State of Missouri.

In the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems instead

of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty-million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble, and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had scandals in corporate America and the march to war, all of which affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

We understand that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are likely to find a job. We are returning more money to the people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so every single person in this country has the chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of 2003 show the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing. And we've added 300,000 new jobs over the last 4 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We're bringing high standards and strong accountability measures to every public school in America. See, we believe every child—every child—can learn the basics of reading and math, and we expect every school to teach the basics of reading and math. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. The days of excusemaking are over. We expect results so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized the Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Missouri's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements that is helping to maintain much needed spending discipline in Washington, DC.

And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's seniors since the founding of Medicare. The new Medicare law will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their health care, so they receive the modern medical care they deserve.

On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people. The United States Congress deserves a lot of credit. I enjoy my relationship with Speaker Denny Hastert and Leader Bill Frist. These are two strong, fine leaders.

I appreciate working with the Members, the Senators from the State of Missouri and the Members of the House of Representatives. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC. There's too much needless politics and endless backbiting, and the best way to change the tone is to focus on

results, to be results-oriented people, to deliver progress on behalf of all Americans. And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration.

I've put together the finest administration of any President in our Nation's history, good, honorable, decent, hard-working people who have come to Washington, DC, to serve a cause greater than their own self-interest. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we've come far. We have done a lot, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so that every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the great promise of our country.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all people can be certain they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. The Ba'athist holdouts, largely responsible for the current violence, now know there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have taken the winning side.

We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States, but America will never be intimidated by a bunch of assassins and thugs.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will never have to face them in our own country. We're calling on other nations to help build a free Iraq, because a free Iraq will make the whole world more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

We're working hard to oppose proliferation around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya voluntarily committed to disclose and dismantle all its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige; they bring isolation and unwelcome consequences. And nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, this great country is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. This great, compassionate land is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home, and our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. My administration will stay focused on a progrowth agenda until everyone who wants to work can find a job.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits

which increase the cost of medicine. People who get harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Because frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they affect the Federal budget. Therefore, medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. The House of Representatives passed a good bill to reform the system. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. I want to thank the two Missouri Senators for supporting this incredibly important piece of legislation. Other Members of the Senate must understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America.

I have a responsibility as President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy bill and get it to my desk. This Nation must promote energy efficiency and conservation. We must work to develop cleaner technology to help us explore for energy in environmentally sensitive ways. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we need to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, applying the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need.

There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on the Government and become independent through hard work. We must continue to build on the successes of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens.

Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more Americans can serve their communities and their country. Both houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative, so we can better support the armies of compassion, people of all faiths who are willing to lead with their heart and help solve the problems that seem intractable in our society. We need to support those soldiers in the armies of compassion who are mentoring the children, caring for the homeless, and offering hope for the addicted. This Nation must not fear the influence of faith in our society. We must welcome the works of faith in our society.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for every one of us, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. My administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America. I want to thank the Senate for passing the downpayment assistance plan to help more people afford a new home. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts and owning and managing their own health care accounts. We want more people to own their own small business. This administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of this country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another, respect another person's religion and their point of view. And people take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in the responsibility society, each of us is responsible for

loving a neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

We can see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been incredibly strong. People are serving our Nation by helping somebody who hurts.

You know, the great fabric of America exists at the community level, where civic groups are formed to put—reach out a hand to someone in need. It's really one of the great strengths of our country. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us on a daily basis what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America, and I have been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use our strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. at America's Center. In his remarks, he referred to William H.T. "Bucky" Bush, Missouri State chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Missouri Secretary of State Matt Blunt; Catherine Hanaway, speaker, Missouri State house of representatives; Peter Kinder, president pro tempore, Missouri State senate; Stephen Brauer, former U.S. Ambassador to Belgium, and his wife, Camilla; former Senator John Danforth, Special Envoy for Peace in the Sudan; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Memorandum on Eligibility of the Regional Security System (RSS) To Receive Defense Articles and Services Under the Foreign Assistance Act and the Arms Export Control Act

January 5, 2004

Presidential Determination No. 2004–20

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Eligibility of the Regional Security System (RSS) to Receive Defense Articles and Services under the Foreign Assistance Act and the Arms Export Control Act

Consistent with the provisions of section 503(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and section 3(a)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, I hereby find that the furnishing of defense articles and services to the RSS will strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace.

You are authorized and directed to report this finding to the Congress and to publish it in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya

January 5, 2004

On January 7, 1986, by Executive Order 12543, President Reagan declared a national emergency to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of the Government of Libya. On January 8, 1986, by Executive Order 12544, the President took additional measures to block Libyan assets in the United States. The President has transmitted a notice continuing this emergency to the Congress and the *Federal Register* every year since 1986.

The crisis between the United States and Libya that led to the declaration of a national emergency on January 7, 1986, has not been fully resolved, although there have been some positive developments.

On September 12, 2003, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1506 (UNSCR 1506), ending the United Nations sanctions against Libya. These U.N. sanctions were imposed in 1992 and 1993 as a result of Libyan involvement in the terrorist bombings of Pan Am 103 in 1988 and UTA 772 in 1989, and included travel restrictions, an arms embargo, and financial sanctions. The UNSCR 1506 lifted these sanctions after Libya addressed the requirements of the relevant UNSC Resolutions, including accepting responsibility for the actions of its officials in the Pan Am 103 attack and arranging to compensate the families of the victims. The United States abstained from voting on the lifting of U.N. sanctions, and it made clear that it continued to have serious concerns about other Libyan policies and actions, including Libya's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, Libya's role with respect to terrorism, and Libya's poor human rights record.

On December 19, 2003, Prime Minister Blair and I announced separately that Libya's leader, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, had agreed to eliminate all elements of Libya's chemical and nuclear weapons program, declare all nuclear activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), accept international inspections to ensure Libya's complete adherence to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and sign the IAEA Additional Protocol, accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention, eliminate ballistic missiles beyond 300 kilometer range, and immediately and unconditionally allow inspectors from international organizations to enter Libya. Libya's declaration of December 19, 2003, marks an important and welcome step toward addressing the concerns of the world community. As Libya takes tangible steps to address those concerns, the United States will in turn take reciprocal tangible steps to recognize Libya's progress. Libya's agreement marks the beginning of a process of rejoining the community of nations, but its declaration of December 19, 2003, must be followed by verification of concrete steps.

Therefore, consistent with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing the national emergency with respect to Libya. This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
January 5, 2004.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 1:13 p.m., January 5, 2004]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on January 6.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Libya

January 5, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. Consistent with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice, stating that the Libya emergency is to continue in effect beyond January 7, 2004, to the *Federal Register* for publication. The most recent notice continuing this emergency was published in the *Federal Register* on January 6, 2003 (68 *Fed. Reg.* 661).

On September 12, 2003, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1506 (UNSCR 1506), ending the U.N. sanctions against Libya. These U.N. sanctions were imposed in 1992 and 1993 as a result of Libyan involvement in the terrorist bombings of Pan Am 103 and UTA 772, and included travel restrictions, an arms embargo, and financial sanctions. The UNSCR 1506 lifted these sanctions after Libya addressed the requirements of the relevant UNSC Resolutions, including making arrangements to compensate the families of the victims and accepting responsibility for the acts of its officials in the bombing of Pan Am 103. The United States abstained from voting on the lifting of the U.N. sanctions, and it made

clear that it continued to have serious concerns about other Libyan policies and actions, including Libya's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, Libya's role with regard to terrorism, and Libya's poor human rights record.

On December 19, 2003, Prime Minister Blair and I announced separately that Libya's leader, Colonel Muammar Qadhafi, had agreed to eliminate all elements of Libya's chemical and nuclear weapons program, declare all nuclear activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), accept international inspections to ensure Libya's complete adherence to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and sign the IAEA Additional Protocol, accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention, eliminate ballistic missiles beyond 300 kilometer range, and immediately and unconditionally allow inspectors from international organizations to enter Libya. Libya's agreement marks the beginning of a process that can lead to Libya rejoining the international community, but its declaration of December 19, 2003, must be followed by verification of concrete steps.

Despite the positive developments, the crisis with respect to Libya has not been fully resolved, and I have therefore determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Libya and maintain in force the comprehensive sanctions against Libya.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks on Immigration Reform

January 7, 2004

Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for joining me as I make this important announcement, an announcement that I believe will make America a more compassionate and more humane and stronger country.

I appreciate members of my Cabinet who have joined me today, starting with our Secretary of State, Colin Powell. I'm honored that our Attorney General, John Ashcroft, has joined us; Secretary of Commerce Don Evans; Secretary Tom Ridge of the Department of Homeland Security, I'm honored you're here; *el embajador de Mexico*, Tony Garza. I thank all the other members of my administration who have joined us today.

I appreciate the Members of Congress who have taken time to come: Senator Larry Craig, Congressman Chris Cannon, and Congressman Jeff Flake. I'm honored you all have joined us. Thank you for coming.

I appreciate the members of citizen groups who have joined us today: chairman of the Hispanic Alliance for Progress, Manny Lujan; Gil Moreno, the president and CEO of the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans; Roberto de Posada, the president of the Latino Coalition; and Hector Flores, the president of LULAC. Thank you all for joining us.

Many of you here today are Americans by choice, and you have followed in the path of millions. And over the generations, we have received energetic, ambitious, optimistic people from every part of the world. By tradition and conviction, our country is a welcoming society. America is a stronger and better nation because of the hard work and the faith and the entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants.

Every generation of immigrants has reaffirmed the wisdom of remaining open to the talents and dreams of the world. And every generation of immigrants has reaffirmed our ability to assimilate newcomers, which is one of the defining strengths of America.

During one great period of immigration, between 1891 and 1920, our Nation received some 18 million men, women, and children from other nations. The hard work of these immigrants helped make our economy the largest in the world. The children of immigrants put on the uniform and helped to liberate the lands of their ancestors. One of the primary reasons America became a great power in the 20th century is because we welcomed the talent and the character and the patriotism of immigrant families.

The contributions of immigrants to America continue. About 14 percent of our Nation's civilian workforce is foreign-born. Most

begin their working lives in America by taking hard jobs and clocking long hours in important industries. Many immigrants also start businesses, taking the familiar path from hired labor to ownership.

As a Texan, I have known many immigrant families, mainly from Mexico, and I have seen what they add to our country. They bring to America the values of faith in God, love of family, hard work, and self-reliance, the values that made us a great nation to begin with. We've all seen those values in action, through the service and sacrifice of more than 35,000 foreign-born men and women currently on active duty in the United States military. One of them is Master Gunnery Sergeant Guadalupe Denogean, an immigrant from Mexico who has served in the Marine Corps for 25 years and counting. Last year, I was honored and proud to witness Sergeant Denogean take the oath of citizenship in a hospital where he was recovering from wounds he received in Iraq. I'm honored to be his Commander in Chief. I'm proud to call him fellow American.

As a nation that values immigration and depends on immigration, we should have immigration laws that work and make us proud. Yet today, we do not. Instead, we see many employers turning to the illegal labor market. We see millions of hard-working men and women condemned to fear and insecurity in a massive undocumented economy. Illegal entry across our borders makes more difficult the urgent task of securing the homeland. The system is not working. Our Nation needs an immigration system that serves the American economy and reflects the American Dream.

Reform must begin by confronting a basic fact of life and economics: Some of the jobs being generated in America's growing economy are jobs American citizens are not filling. Yet these jobs represent a tremendous opportunity for workers from abroad who want to work and fulfill their duties as a husband or a wife, a son or a daughter. Their search for a better life is one of the most basic desires of human beings.

Many undocumented workers have walked mile after mile through the heat of the day and the cold of the night. Some have risked their lives in dangerous desert border crossings or entrusted their lives to the brutal rings of heartless human smugglers. Workers who seek only to earn a living end up in the shadows of American life, fearful, often abused and exploited. When they are victimized by crime, they are afraid to call the police or seek recourse in the legal system. They are cut off from their families far away, fearing if they leave our country to visit relatives back home, they might never be able to return to their jobs.

The situation I described is wrong. It is not the American way. Out of common sense and fairness, our laws should allow willing workers to enter our country and fill jobs that Americans are not filling. We must make our immigration laws more rational and more humane. And I believe we can do so without jeopardizing the livelihoods of American citizens.

Our reforms should be guided by a few basic principles. First, America must control its borders. Following the attacks of September the 11th, 2001, this duty of the Federal Government has become even more urgent, and we're fulfilling that duty. For the first time in our history, we have consolidated all border agencies under one roof to make sure they share information and the work is more effective. We're matching all visa applicants against an expanded screening list to identify terrorists and criminals and immigration violators. This month, we have begun using advanced technology to better record and track aliens who enter our country and to make sure they leave as scheduled. We have deployed new gamma and x-ray systems to scan cargo and containers and shipments at ports of entry to America. We have significantly expanded the Border Patrol with more than 1,000 new agents on the borders and 40 percent greater funding over the last 2 years. We're working closely with the Canadian and Mexican Governments to increase border security. America is acting on a basic belief: Our borders should be open to legal travel and honest trade; our borders should be shut and barred tight to criminals, to drug traders—to drug traffickers and to criminals and to terrorists.

Second, new immigration laws should serve the economic needs of our country. If an American employer is offering a job that

American citizens are not willing to take, we ought to welcome into our country a person who will fill that job.

Third, we should not give unfair rewards to illegal immigrants in the citizenship process or disadvantage those who came here lawfully or hope to do so.

Fourth, new laws should provide incentives for temporary foreign workers to return permanently to their home countries after their period of work in the United States has expired.

Today I ask the Congress to join me in passing new immigration laws that reflect these principles, that meet America's economic needs and live up to our highest ideals.

I propose a new temporary-worker program that will match willing foreign workers with willing American employers when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs. This program will offer legal status as temporary workers to the millions of undocumented men and women now employed in the United States and to those in foreign countries who seek to participate in the program and have been offered employment here. This new system should be clear and efficient so employers are able to find workers quickly and simply.

All who participate in the temporary-worker program must have a job or, if not living in the United States, a job offer. The legal status granted by this program will last 3 years and will be renewable, but it will have an end. Participants who do not remain employed, who do not follow the rules of the program, or who break the law will not be eligible for continued participation and will be required to return to their home.

Under my proposal, employers have key responsibilities. Employers who extend job offers must first make every reasonable effort to find an American worker for the job at hand. Our Government will develop a quick and simple system for employers to search for American workers. Employers must not hire undocumented aliens or temporary workers whose legal status has expired. They must report to the Government the temporary workers they hire and who leave their employ so that we can keep track of people in the program and better enforce our immigration laws. There must be strong workplace enforcement with tough penalties for anyone, for any employer, violating these laws.

Undocumented workers now here will be required to pay a one-time fee to register for the temporary-worker program. Those who seek to join the program from abroad and have complied with our immigration laws will not have to pay any fee. All participants will be issued a temporary-worker card that will allow them to travel back and forth between their home and the United States without fear of being denied reentry into our country.

This program expects temporary workers to return permanently to their home countries after their period of work in the United States has expired, and there should be financial incentives for them to do so. I will work with foreign governments on a plan to give temporary workers credit, when they enter their own nation's retirement system, for the time they have worked in America. I also support making it easier for temporary workers to contribute a portion of their earnings to tax-preferred savings accounts, money they can collect as they return to their native countries. After all, in many of those countries, a small nest egg is what is necessary to start their own business or buy some land for their family.

Some temporary workers will make the decision to pursue American citizenship. Those who make this choice will be allowed to apply in the normal way. They will not be given unfair advantage over people who have followed legal procedures from the start.

I oppose amnesty, placing undocumented workers on the automatic path to citizenship. Granting amnesty encourages the violation of our laws and perpetuates illegal immigration. America is a welcoming country, but citizenship must not be the automatic reward for violating the laws of America.

The citizenship line, however, is too long, and our current limits on legal immigration are too low. My administration will work with the Congress to increase the annual number of green cards that can lead to citizenship. Those willing to take the difficult path of citizenship, the path of work and patience and assimilation, should be welcome in America like generations of immigrants before them.

In the process of immigration reform, we must also set high expectations for what new citizens should know. An understanding of what it means to be an American is not a formality in the naturalization process; it is essential to full participation in our democracy. My administration will examine the standard of knowledge in the current citizenship test. We must ensure that new citizens know not only the facts of our history but the ideals that have shaped our history. Every citizen of America has an obligation to learn the values that make us one Nation: liberty and civic responsibility, equality under God, tolerance for others.

This new temporary-worker program will bring more than economic benefits to America. Our homeland will be more secure when we can better account for those who enter our country, instead of the current situation in which millions of people are unknown, unknown to the law. Law enforcement will face fewer problems with undocumented workers and will be better able to focus on the true threats to our Nation from criminals and terrorists. And when temporary workers can travel legally and freely, there will be more efficient management of our borders and more effective enforcement against those who pose a true threat to our country.

This new system will be more compassionate. Decent, hard-working people will now be protected by labor laws, with the right to change jobs, earn fair wages, and enjoy the same working conditions that the law requires for American workers. Temporary workers will be able to establish their identities by obtaining the legal documents that we all take for granted. And they will be able to talk openly to authorities, to report crimes when they are harmed, without the fear of being deported.

The best way in the long run to reduce the pressures that create illegal immigration in the first place is to expand economic opportunity among the countries in our neighborhood. In a few days I will go to Mexico for the special Summit of the Americas, where we will discuss ways to advance free trade and to fight corruption and encourage the reforms that lead to prosperity. Real growth and real hope in the nations of our hemisphere will lessen the flow of new immigrants to America when more citizens of other countries are able to achieve their dreams at their own home.

Yet our country has always benefited from the dreams that others have brought here. By working hard for a better life, immigrants contribute to the life of our Nation. The temporary-worker program I am proposing today represents the best tradition of our society, a society that honors the law and welcomes the newcomer. This plan will help return order and fairness to our immigration system. And in so doing, we will honor our values by showing our respect for those who work hard and share in the ideals of America.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Antonio O. Garza, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks in a Discussion at West View Elementary School in Knoxville, Tennessee

January 8, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming, Melvenia, thanks. We are here because West View Elementary School is an example of what can happen when you have leadership that is willing to set high standards and to hold people to account and to realize every child can learn.

One of the things that I've learned as a Governor, now as the President, that successful schools not only require a teaching corps that cares a lot and parents involved in the school, but it requires a principal who is willing to challenge mediocrity. And so, Melvenia, you're right. We're here because you've been successful, and the results show it. This school had been measured during the measurement process, early measurement process, had been a school that wasn't performing the way you wanted it or any citizen of Knoxville, Tennessee, would want. In other words, it was below standards.

And now it's exemplary in math, above standards in reading. You're accomplishing that which we all want, and that is not one

single child be left behind in the State of Tennessee and the city of Knoxville. You're doing a great job. Thank you for your hospitality.

I mentioned the No Child Left Behind Act. We're here to discuss that piece of bipartisan legislation. It is legislation which I would call historic, because for the first time, the Federal Government is spending more money and now asking for results. See, in the past it used to be we would send a check and hope something happened. And now the Federal Government is sending checks, at record amounts, I might add, for Title I students and teacher training and reading programs. But we're now saying, "Listen, we trust you. We trust the Melvenias of the world and the teachers to accomplish a mission. Why don't you just show us that you are."

And so we've worked with States and local governments to develop an accountability system all around the country, accountability systems which says that, first of all, we believe in the worth and the intelligence of every child, an accountability system that says, let us know whether or not every child is learning, accountability system that tests curriculum to determine whether they're working, accountability systems that enable us to address problems early before they're too late.

The No Child Left Behind Act is a great piece of legislation which is making a difference around our country. We've got some people here from around America that are going to discuss what they're doing to accomplish the national objective in a positive way. The national objective is to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations and to raise the standards for every single child.

You don't know unless you measure. Listen, I've heard every excuse in the book about measurement. You know, "You're testing too much." "You're teaching the test." And, you know, "Don't test." If you don't test, you have a system that just shuffles the kids through, and that's unacceptable. It's unacceptable to quit on a kid early and just say, "Move through, and hope you learn." What you've got to do is measure to determine where they are, and then you can compare districts and compare States.

And as a result of strong accountability measures and good teachers and more funding, the results are positive, the fourth grade math test scores around the Nation are up 9 points since 2000. In other words, we're beginning to achieve—meet national objectives, which is a more literate group of students. The reading—eighth grade math scores are up 5 points. Fourth graders are now testing above—reading tests are increasing for fourth graders. We're making a difference.

And I say "we." It's not the Federal Government that's making the difference. The Federal Government is a funding mechanism for Title I students and for some teacher training programs. But the truth of the matter is, the responsibility for educational excellence resides at the local level. Teachers must be free to teach. Principals must be free to lead. Superintendents of schools must be comfortable with making changes where change is needed. The best education policy is local control of schools, and that's exactly what's another part of the No Child Left Behind Act that's important for you all to understand.

We've got some people here in the audience I want to introduce, before we get to our panel, that know something about education. They're on the frontlines of education reform. But before I do so, speaking about a guy who is on the frontline of education reform, the United States Senator from the great State of Tennessee, Lamar Alexander, is with us. He was a former Governor. He was willing to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations before it was cool to challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations. He did a excellent job as the Secretary of Education under old Number 41—[*laughter*]—and is now a fine United States Senator. Senator, I'm honored you're with us today. Thank you for coming.

Jimmy Duncan and Zach Wamp and Bill Jenkins and Marsha Blackburn are all Members of the United States Congress. Of course, this is Jimmy's district, as he was quick to point out at the airport. [*Laughter*] And he invited the three other Congresspeople with us today. But these are fine Members of the Congress. These are people that believe in the value and worth

of every single child. They understand that public education is a top domestic priority of this administration. I thank them for being here, and I appreciate your good work on this issue. Thanks for coming.

Charles Lindsey is with us. He's the superintendent of the Knox County schools. Charles, I'm honored you're here. I appreciate you coming. Bill Haslam is the mayor, newly elected mayor. Where are you, Bill? Thanks for coming. I'm glad you're here. My only advice is to fill the potholes and collect the garbage. [*Laughter*] Mike Ragsdale, who is the mayor of Knox County, is with us. Michael, thank you for coming, Mr. Mayor. I appreciate you being here.

I met a fellow at the airport named Nat Foster. You probably haven't heard of Nat. Where are you, Nat? Oh, there you are. Thanks for coming. Nat is a—I told him at the airport, I said, "You're a drill sergeant in the army of compassion." You see, Nat is a—one of millions of our fellow citizens who has heard the call to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself and is a mentor. He understands what I know, that the strength of the country is the heart and soul of our fellow citizens. The fact that people are willing to take time out of their busy life and to tutor a child, to serve as a role model for a child, and to teach a child how to read is a defining part of the American civic scene.

And I appreciate Nat Foster being here. I appreciate his willingness to serve as an example for others. January happens to be National Mentoring Month. I hope others in the Knoxville area and all around Tennessee and the country, for that matter, follow the lead of a soldier in the army of compassion like Nat and serve your country and your State and your community by finding a child who needs adult guidance and mentor, to serve as an example. We can change America one heart and one soul and one conscience at a time.

I'm joined today by the Secretary of Education. He was the superintendent of schools in Houston, Texas, when I was the Governor. I saw firsthand his deep desire to defeat mediocrity, to insist upon excellence for every single child regardless of their background. He had a deep understanding that every child can learn, and the system must understand that.

I'm comfortable in asking the Congress for more money in the '05 budget, which I will do. We've increased the Title I disadvantaged students spending by 52 percent since fiscal year '01. The teachers and principal program is up by 39 percent. The reading programs are up by over 400 percent. The reason I'm comfortable is because I know that at the helm of the Department of Education, we have a man who knows that putting money into a bad system is not money well-spent. Putting money into a system that believes in the worth of every child and is focused on results is money well-spent. And that man is Rod Paige. Rod, thank you for joining us. I'd be glad to have some comments.

You've got something to say?

Secretary Paige. Well, Mr. President, I do.

The President. Because you better. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the discussion continued.*]

The President. Thank you, Rod. You see, what he's saying is, if you believe certain kids can't learn, guess what, they're not going to. If you believe certain children, based upon the color of their skin, can't learn, they won't. And the system will reflect that. Basically, at some school districts, I hate to say, the tendency is to say, "Let's just move them through. They can't learn, therefore, why measure, why determine, why don't we just get them out of the way?" That's unacceptable to America. It's unacceptable to our Secretary of Education. I appreciate the attitude of busting the status quo when the status quo is not meeting the great dreams of our country.

Public education, we've got to get it right. It's the gateway to hope. It is essential for this country to have a public education system that responds to the needs of every child so that we can meet great objectives for this country. It's trite. It's been said a lot, but it's true: The future of the country depends on our capacity to educate every child.

A person who understands that is Dr. Jim Pughsley from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg public school system. He's the superintendent of schools. And he and Rod have

been superintendents before. The reason why he has been invited is because he brings an extraordinary record as the superintendent of schools. Seven years ago, African American fifth graders reading at grade level in the State of North Carolina were at 35 percent in his district. Today, they're at 78 percent. All fifth graders 7 years ago were at 59 percent. And now, they're at 86 percent.

So not only has it been improvement for all students, the minority knowledge gap has closed dramatically. I'll let Jim tell you why, but as a result of these great results and his leadership and the leadership, obviously—I'm sure he'll tell you—of principals and teachers who get it, who understand that every child matters, he was named the 2003 Superintendent of the Year by the National Alliance of Black School Educators.

Welcome. I'm glad you're here, Jim. Thanks for coming.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. I'll drop a fancy word on you called "disaggregate." What he said, "We're disaggregating results. We're focusing not just on the whole. We're trying to understand whether or not a black child is learning or a Hispanic child is learning." In other words, we're unwilling to accept the past, where everybody was just kind of measured all together. What we want to know is, we want to know specifically who is succeeding and who is not. And the No Child Left Behind Act provides additional Federal money to stay focused on those children who need help early.

And that's an essential part. You see, these school districts measure. They see a child needs a little extra help in reading or an after-school program. There is money in the budget to focus on that child. And that's an essential change, an essential reform.

Kathy Cox, who is the State school superintendent from the great State of Georgia, has joined us. She was a classroom teacher for 15 years. She is now the executive director of the Department of Education. I'm honored you're here. Why don't you share with us your experiences in the great State of Georgia.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. I want to pick up on two points she made. One is truancy and parental involvement. There's nothing like test results being published to get the attention of a parent. A lot of parents believe in the best, of course, and they believe that the school their child goes to was meeting all kinds of standards and is an excellent school. After all, they've been told that. That may not be the case. And so when you begin to publish the test results, it does enhance parental involvement. It encourages the parent to become involved.

What the No Child Left Behind Act does, it not only provides extra help for a child that needs help early; it also gives parents more options in the process. A parent can take money and send that child to an after-school tutoring program—by the way, tutoring programs, the sponsor of which can be public-sector or private-sector programs. The child can send the—the parent can send the child to another public school. In other words, there is a consequence.

Because one of the principles in the No Child Left Behind Act is we're not going to leave children trapped in schools that will not teach or change. There's time for schools to change. There's time for schools to use the accountability system to determine whether or not they're using the right curriculum or not. But there has to be an end to mediocrity at some point in time, and that's what the—it's for the parents, as far as the parents are concerned, so the parents have got a lot of different options now available when a school district takes Title I money. And that's a very important reform.

But the most important part of the reform is that parents are now becoming more involved in their schools. After all, the child's first teacher is a mom or a dad. And it's essential, as the principal will tell you, that the more civic involvement you get with your schools, the more parental involvement you get with your schools, the more likely it is that school is going to be able to meet the objectives of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Speaking about people who understand the need to use a curriculum that works, Norm Mishelow is with us. He is a principal at the Barton Elementary School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He has come south for

some warm weather. [*Laughter*] Didn't work. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Mishelow. I think it's the same temperature here as there.

The President. That's right. [*Laughter*] One of the things we've done is we've, at the Federal level, put a primary focus on reading. As I mentioned to you, the amount of reading money now available is an increase of 400 percent over the last 3 years. And what's important about reading programs is they actually work, not that they sound good, but they actually achieve the objective. And the way to determine whether or not reading programs work is to measure. If a child can read, it will show up on an accountability system.

And Norm, why don't you tell us about what we call research-based reading programs and tell us about your school and what you're doing.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. A couple of observations. First of all, we're learning what works when it comes to reading. It's not guesswork anymore. For a while it was a guesswork. You might remember the great debates—capsulized, whole language versus phonics. There was a lot of political capital expended over that, and all of a sudden the accountability system starts to clarify reality. And as Norm mentioned, they've chosen a program and a curriculum that is now working. Why do we know? Because they measure. They're able to tell because there is a measurement standard. The other thing that happens when Norm's school does well, other schools say, "Wait a minute. Old Norm doesn't seem to be all that good. How is he able to do what he's doing?" [*Laughter*]

Mr. Mishelow. Who are you talking to?

The President. Well—[*laughter*]—just guessing, Norm. [*Laughter*] But he serves as a go-by. See, when you have accountability and you lay the results out for everybody to see, all of a sudden people start saying, "What's Norm doing that I'm not doing?" Because as Norm mentioned to you, he's taken a school of children who, you know, that are the—as we say—used to say, tough to educate, and showing what can happen. I appreciate, Norm, your leadership. You said you've got a great staff. You do. It also—you're a educational entrepreneur, somebody who is willing to focus on what works. And thank you for what you're doing. I appreciate—I know the people of Milwaukee are thrilled that you are where you are.

With us as well is Margie Willis, Grace Christian Elementary, Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Grace Christian is a Title I school, receives Title I money. Title I, by the way, for those who aren't aware of the term, are Federal monies aimed at economically disadvantaged kids. It's an important part of the Federal funding—or the education funding program. It's a commitment that the Federal Government has made, will continue to make.

But Margie is a literacy coach. That's an interesting term, isn't it? She is—has met—the students have met expectations. Tell us about your school, Margie. Tell us what you're doing, and tell us how you've been so successful.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Well, I appreciate you. Thank you so much. By the way, research-based reading means phonics, in essence. And it is—it works. It works, and we know it works, and you've heard personal testimony that it does work. And I would urge schools that aren't using research-based reading programs to take a look at them. If you're not meeting standards, listen to the personal testimony of people in the frontline of public education, and listen to the joy in their voices about achieving fantastic results and watching all the kids from all walks of life, all economic backgrounds succeeding.

I'll never forget, one time we were in Houston, and Rod had a—he didn't call her a reading—a literacy coach. He called her a reading czar, but anyway—czarina in this case. And she stood up and said, "Reading is the new civil right." And we're getting it right in more and more schools. I want to thank both of you all for being on the front edge of change. Thank you for your examples.

Jerry Hodges is with us today. He's the executive director of Project GRAD based right here in Knoxville, Tennessee. Project GRAD is a nonprofit trying to close the

achievement gap by talking about and spreading curriculum that works. Thanks for coming.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Well, I appreciate it. Thanks, good job. Thank you.

Nonprofits, corporate Tennessee, people who care about the future of your State need to follow the example of Project GRAD and become involved in your school districts. I appreciate the superintendent and the school board members for reaching out and understanding that educational excellence is a local responsibility. I mean, people really shouldn't hope that the Federal Government develops the blueprint for success. That's not our role. And you don't want a one-size-fits-all education approach. You want a—the best education reform comes when the local people decide to reform, when your principals reform, when the people running at the State level reform, when businesses and local community leaders say, "Wait a minute. We're not happy with the way things are. Let's change for the good of everybody."

And that's what's taking place here in Knox County schools. I want to thank you for that. Listen, I want to thank you all for coming. I'm honored our panel came from around the country to share with us the stories of success. And by the way, we're just beginning in America. See, one of these days, we won't have enough room on the stages as we bring people from all around the country to talk about what is happening, the tremendous success as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act. I'm honored you all came. I want to thank you again for believing in every child and raising that bar and believing in the worth of every individual.

May God bless your work, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The discussion began at 11:14 a.m. In his remarks, the President referred to Melvenia Smith, principal, West View Elementary School; and Mayor Bill Haslam of Knoxville, TN. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Knoxville

January 8, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's glad—I'm glad to be in the land of the orange and white. UT—kind of sounds like home. [*Laughter*] Really appreciate coming back to Knoxville. I'm so thrilled that so many came out to support the Bush-Cheney ticket. As you might recall, we had pretty good success here in the year 2000. Because of today, we're laying the foundation for what is going to be even better success in Tennessee in 2004. We're on our way to a national victory in November of 2004.

I'm loosening up—[*laughter*]—and I'm getting ready. But there will be plenty of time for politics, because I've got a job to do on behalf of every citizen of this country. I'm focused on the people's business in Washington, DC. My administration will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans, by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I'm honored you invited me here today. I know I wasn't your first choice. [*Laughter*] Laura was tied up. [*Laughter*] She's a fabulous First Lady. I'm a lucky man that she said yes when I said, "Will you marry me?" She really sends her best and her love. She's—I'm really proud of her.

I also want to thank my friend Lamar Alexander for doing such a fine job in the United States Senate on behalf of the great people of Tennessee. He brings such class and dignity to public office. You've known that when he was your Governor. He's now doing it again as the Senator, as is the other Senator from the great State of Tennessee, Senator Bill Frist, the majority leader of the United States Senate. You've done a great job of sending two fine people to the Senate.

I'm honored that members of the congressional delegation from Tennessee have joined us today, starting with your own homegrown Jimmy Duncan. I appreciate you, Jimmy. I got off Air Force One and the first thing he said was, "This is my district." [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Congressman Zach Wamp for joining us today. Thank you for being

here, Zach. Congressman Bill Jenkins is with us today. Congressman, thank you for coming. I see you got a seat in the back. [*Laughter*] And Congresswoman Marsha Blackburn is with us today. Marsha, thank you for being here.

I'm honored that members of the statehouse have come. It's always a good sign when the State senators and State legislators are coming. After all, all good politics is local politics. I want to thank Ben Atchley, he's the Republican leader in the State senate, for joining us today. Beth Harwell, who is the chairman of the Tennessee Republican Party, is with us. I want to thank you for coming too, Beth.

I'm so honored that many of you all took time to make this event a successful event. Jim Haslam is event cochairman. Big Jim, I thank you for your friendship, and I appreciate—I also appreciate Jimmy for being the event cochairman. And I appreciate the fact that the mayor is with us today as well.

I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's the national finance chairman of Bush-Cheney. He's working hard to make sure that this campaign is well-funded. When the campaign starts, we want to be ready to go. And thanks to the people in this room, and thanks to people around the country, when the campaign gets started we are going to be ready to go.

I appreciate David Kustoff, who is the State chairman. His job is to rally the grassroots. And so, for those of you who are involved in grassroots politics here in Tennessee, I want to thank you for what you're going to do. I want to thank you for the signs you're going to put up. I want to thank you for the phone calls you're going to make. I'm want to thank you for joining us as we turn out the vote to make sure this good State turns out in significant numbers.

And as you're turning out that vote, I want you to remind them, in the last 3 years our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was beginning. And then we had attacks on our country and corporate scandals and war, which all affected the people's confidence. But this administration acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

We understand that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. So we're returning more money—money to people to help them raise their families. We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we are laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so that every single person in this country has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of 2003 show that the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is increasing. We've added over 300,000 new jobs in the last 4 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the

Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We're spending more money at the Federal level, but we're finally asking the question, "Are you teaching the children how to read and write and add and subtract?" This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations because we believe that every child can learn, and we expect every school to teach. The days of excusemaking are over. No child should be left behind in America.

We reorganized the Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard the borders and ports of our country and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Tennessee's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements that is helping to maintain much-needed spending discipline in Washington, DC.

And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's seniors since the founding of Medicare. The new Medicare law, that I pushed for and signed, will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their health care, so that they can receive the modern health care that they deserve.

On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made great progress for the American people. A lot of credit belongs to the Members of the United States Senate and the United States Congress. I enjoy working with Majority Leader Bill Frist. You know as well as I do he's plenty capable, plenty competent, and a very decent man. I enjoy working with Speaker Denny Hastert, who shares the same characteristics as Bill Frist, an honorable, decent man.

We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC. There's too much backbiting, endless politics, name-calling. The best way to change the tone is to focus on the people's business and to focus on results. And that's what we're doing with the Congress. Our record has been a good record. And those are the kind of people I've asked to join my administration. I put together a fantastic team of people, people from all walks of life to serve our country, people who have come to the Nation's Capital not to represent their own special interests but to represent the greatest country on the face of the Earth. There's been no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we've done a lot. We have come far, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of this great Nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we will work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the great promise of our country. It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed. We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all people can be certain that they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. He started last year in a palace. He ended this year in a prison. The Ba'athist holdouts largely responsible for the current violence now know there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have taken the winning side.

We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. And there is a reason why. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq will be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We're aggressively after them in Iraq, defeating them there so we will never have to face them in our own country. Other nations are helping, because they understand a free Iraq will make the world more secure. We're

standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

We're working to oppose proliferation of weapons around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya voluntarily committed to disclose and dismantle all its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige; they bring isolation and unwelcomed consequences. And nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Yet our greatest security comes from the advance of freedom, from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation, and we understand that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children now suffering with AIDS. This powerful, strong, and compassionate land is leading the entire world on this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home as well. We'll be equal to those challenges. This administration will continue to push a progrowth, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda so that people who want to work and can't find a job today will be able to find that job.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care and they, therefore, affect the Federal budget.

Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I sent a bill over to the House, and the House of Representatives passed a good bill to reform the system. The bill is stuck in the Senate. I look forward to working with Senator Frist and Senator Alexander to convince reluctant Senators to act on behalf of all the people in America and get a good medical liability bill to my desk. Some Members of the Senate must understand that no one in America has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women to the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some of the Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to get an energy bill to my desk. This Nation must be more energy-efficient. We must conserve our resources. We must do a better job of protecting the quality of the air in places like Knoxville, Tennessee. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, we must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need. There's still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on the Government and become independent through hard work. We must build on the success of welfare reform to bring more work and, therefore, dignity

into the lives of our fellow citizens who are still dependent upon the Government.

With the help of Congress, we're working to ensure that more Americans can serve their communities and their country through citizen service programs. I urge both Houses of the United States Congress to pass my Faith-Based Initiative, which will help empower the armies of compassion that are mentoring our children and caring for the homeless and offering hope to the addicted.

One of the great strengths of our country is that we're a nation of many faiths, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths. Out of that faith comes the deep desire for many of our citizens to heed the universal call to help a neighbor who hurts. The Federal Government should never fear the influence of faith-based programs. We ought to welcome faith-based programs into helping solve some of the intractable problems of our society.

A compassionate society is one, also, that must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration understands the power of owning something in our society. We'll constantly strive to promote an ownership society. Listen, we have a minority homeownership gap in America. I proposed plans to the Congress to help close that gap. We want more people owning their own home. We want people owning and managing their own health care accounts and their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small businesses. And that's why developing the entrepreneurial spirit and keeping it strong is so important. You see, we understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another. They respect each other's religious beliefs, political opinions. People take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. See, the culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in Knoxville, Tennessee, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees.

And in the new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself. We can see that culture—the culture of service is strong in America. You know, I started the USA Freedom Corps right after September the 11th to encourage our fellow citizens to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need. And the response has been fantastic. People from all walks of life are serving our Nation by helping people who hurt. Our neighborhood healers are vibrant and strong. Faith-based and charitable organizations thrive in our country. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America, and I have been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. at the Knoxville Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Bill Haslam of Knoxville, TN; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

January 8, 2004

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. It's great to be back in the great State of Florida. We carried it once, and we're going to carry it again.

And I want to thank you all for your help. I appreciate you showing up today. I appreciate your contributions. I appreciate your friendship, appreciate your prayers. I appreciate you laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November of '04.

And I'm getting ready. [*Laughter*] I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But there's plenty of time for politics. See, I've got a job to do. I'm focused on the people's business in Washington, DC. I want you to remind your friends and neighbors that I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every American by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I love my brother Jeb. He is a great Governor. He is a great Governor, first and foremost, because he has a large heart. He cares deeply about the people. He and I share some things in common. We share the same last name. [*Laughter*] We share the same political consultant—[*laughter*]—Mother. [*Laughter*] And we both married extremely well.

I'm honored to be onstage with a fabulous first lady for the State of Florida, Ms. Columba. And a great First Lady for America sends her love. I'm sorry Laura is not here. I know she was Jeb's first choice to be the speaker today. [*Laughter*] She's in Washington. But I'm a lucky man to have married Laura Bush. She is a great wife, a fabulous mother, and a wonderful First Lady for America.

I know my friend and former colleague in the Cabinet Mel Martinez is with us. Mel, thank you for being here today. I know Congressman Mark Foley is with us. Mr. Congressman, I'm glad you're here. I'm sorry Congressman Clay Shaw is not here. This is his district, I understand, but he is traveling with Speaker Denny Hastert. He made a good choice. When the Speaker calls, it's probably a pretty good thing to travel with him. I know the Lieutenant Governor, Toni Jennings, is here. The attorney general, Charlie Crist, is here. Tom Gallagher is here. Where's Gallagher? I appreciate you coming.

A lot of members of the statehouse are here. It's a good sign when State senators and State reps show up. After all, you win campaigns by energizing the grassroots. I appreciate the members of the statehouse being here. I'm looking forward to working with you to carry Florida. I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is to put up the signs, to man the phone booths, to put out the mailers, and to turn out the vote.

I want to thank the mayors and local officials who are here. I want to thank all those who worked hard to make this event such a successful event. We've had three event co-chairmen, the Guzzettas, the Gaineses, and Elizabeth Fago. I want to thank you for your hard work. I appreciate your good work.

My friend Mercer Reynolds is here. He's the national finance chairman. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's taken a lot of time out of his private life to help make sure we get well funded in what's going to be a tough campaign. I want to thank my friend Al Hoffman from the great State of Florida, who is doing such a fantastic job as the—raising money. And of course, there's Tom Petway and Zach Zachariah, two good buddies as well, who have been working hard to make this campaign go well.

In the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. The world is better off, and so are the 50 million people

in those two countries who once lived under tyranny, and today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed and morale was beginning to suffer, so we increased the defense budgets to meet the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was beginning. And I want you to remember what we have come through. Not only was a recession beginning, but our country was attacked. And then there were corporate scandals and war, all of which affected the people's confidence. But this administration acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

This administration understands that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. So we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families. We've reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we have laid the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America, so every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third quarter of the year 2003 show the economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing, and we've added over 300,000 new jobs in the last 4 months. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We've increased spending out of the Federal Government, particularly for Title I students, for the poorest of students. But now, because we believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract, we're insisting that States measure. We want to know.

The State of Florida, led by this great Governor, is on the leading edge of education reform because he holds people to account. And the reason he does is because he and I both know every child can learn. We are challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar. We've raised the standards. We expect results so that not one single child in America is left behind.

We've reorganized our Government during the past 3 years and created the Department of Homeland Security to better guard Florida's ports, better guard our borders, to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Florida's ranchers and farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements, much-needed budget agreements, to help bring spending discipline to Washington, DC.

And last month, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's senior citizens since the creation of Medicare. The new Medicare law that I fought for and signed—the bill that I campaigned for, worked for, and signed will give older Americans the option of a prescription drug benefit and more control over their own health care, so they can receive the modern medical care they deserve.

On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people. The Congress gets a lot of credit. I enjoy working with Majority Leader Bill Frist, Speaker Denny Hastert, Congressman Mark Foley. We're working hard in Washington, DC, to change the tone of the Nation's Capital. There's too much politics, endless backbiting, zero-sum attitudes. And the best way to do that is to stay focused on the people's business and on results. And we have delivered results over the last 3 years.

A major reason this administration has been successful is because I have surrounded myself with really good, decent, capable, honorable people, people from all walks of life, people who have come to the Nation's

Capital to serve the United States of America, not a special or self interest. This Nation has had no finer Vice President than Vice President Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have come far. We've done a lot, but our work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so that every citizen—every citizen—regardless of their background, has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of this country.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror goes on. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where all the people of that country can now be certain they will never again have to fear the rule of Saddam Hussein. The Ba'athist holdouts largely responsible for current violence now know there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held. All Iraqis who have taken the side of freedom have chosen the winning side.

We still face terrorists who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the rise of liberty in the Middle East. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. The United States will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We are on the offensive in Iraq. We're aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there, so we do not have to face them in America. And a lot of nations are helping to build a free Iraq, because they understand a free Iraq is in their interest. A free Iraq will make the world more peaceful. And we're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and more of their own self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. And America will finish what we have begun. We will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

We're working to oppose proliferation of weapons around the world. Last month, after talks with the United States and Great Britain, Libya volunteered to disclose and dismantle all its weapons of mass destruction programs. Leaders around the world now know weapons of mass destruction do not bring influence or prestige. They bring isolation and other unwelcome consequences. And nations who abandon the pursuit of these weapons will find an open path to better relations with the United States of America.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation, and I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world, freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

America understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children suffering with AIDS.

We face challenges here at home as well, and we will prove that we're equal to the challenges. This administration will continue to promote a progrowth, pro-small-business, pro-entrepreneur economic agenda until everybody who wants a job can find one.

And for the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. I appreciate Jeb's leadership on this issue. He and I understand that people who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in

court. Yet, the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, and they therefore affect the Federal budget.

Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I put forth a good plan. The House of Representatives passed it. However, the bill is stuck in the Senate. And I know two United States Senators who keep it stuck in the United States Senate, and they might happen to be from your State. The Senate must act on behalf of the American people and pass medical liability reform, and the Senators must understand no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members from the United States Senate, two of them from this State—[*laughter*]—are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of those Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs an energy plan, and the Congress needs to get an energy plan to my desk. I've been calling for one for several years now, an energy plan that encourages energy efficiency and conservation, that uses technology in wise ways to find additional supplies of energy. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping fellow citizens who are in need. There are still a lot of people, millions of men and women, who want to end their dependence on government, become independent through hard work. We must continue to build on the success of welfare reform to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our fellow citizens.

With the help of Congress, we're working to ensure more Americans serve their communities and through their country—through the citizen service programs. Both Houses should come together and pass my Faith-Based Initiative. Our Government should not fear the influence of faith in the lives of our fellow citizens. As a matter of fact, the great strength of the country is the fact that we're a nation of many faiths. And faith-based community programs are those that are often able to change people's hearts. And when you change a person's heart, you help save a person's life.

We need to rally the armies of compassion, those who mentor our children, those who care for the homeless, those who offer hope to the addicted. A compassionate society is a society that promotes opportunity for every citizen, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America, and I have put forth a plan to close that gap. We want people owning and managing their own health care plans and their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business, because we understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of America.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another. They respect their religious beliefs. They respect their opinions. And they take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're

a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees.

In a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves. And we see the culture of service and responsibility growing around us. You know I started—right after September the 11th, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps. It's a chance for people to find out ways to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been strong, really strong.

A lot of Americans—and I'm sure many are here—understand that patriotism can mean helping somebody who hurts. Charitable organizations in America are vibrant, neighborhood healing groups are really good, faith-based programs are strong. Police and our firefighters and people who wear the Nation's uniform remind us on a daily basis what it means to serve something greater than yourself. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it and know that for our country, the best days lie ahead. May God bless you. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:10 p.m. at the PGA National Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida and his wife, Columba; former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Mel R. Martinez; Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings of Florida; Charlie Crist, Florida State attorney general; Tom Gallagher, chief financial officer, Florida Department of Financial Services; Al Hoffman, finance chairman, Republican National Committee; Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, and Tom Petway III and Zach Zachariah, Florida State finance cochairmen, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Senators Bob Graham and Bill Nelson of Florida. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks in a Discussion With Women Small-Business Owners

January 9, 2004

The President. Thank you all. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. You wrote that—you read that just like I wrote it. [*Laughter*] It's good to be here at the Commerce Department. After all, that's what we're here to discuss, is commerce and jobs and how to keep the entrepreneurial spirit strong in America.

Let me start off by saying, first of all, thank you all for coming. We're going to have an interesting discussion about what it means to own your own business and risk capital and employ people, what it takes to be a businessowner. And we've got five really smart, capable women who are running their own businesses. Before we get to this discussion, though, I want to say I'm really optimistic about the future of our Nation's economy. This economy is strong, and it is getting stronger.

I'm optimistic for one reason, because I just spent a little bit of time with five people who are on the frontline of hiring. Their optimism was really evident, as I think you'll soon hear. Secondly, I'm optimistic because I see things happening. Unemployment dropped today to 5.7 percent. That's not good enough. We want more people still working. But nevertheless, it is a positive sign that the economy is getting better.

I see the manufacturing orders are up dramatically. I know the productivity is high in America. Home construction is strong. All the signs in our economy is—are very strong. And that's positive for somebody who might be wondering about whether he or she is going to find a job.

Secondly, I know what we have overcome in this country. I mean, this economy has got to be pretty darn strong to have come

through what this Nation has come through. Just very quickly, in the beginning of 2001, the country was entering into a recession. I'm sure that affected you all. Recession, by the way, is when there is negative growth for three quarters, when things aren't going well for three consecutive quarters. That's a long period of time if you own your own business. It's a long period of time if you're looking for a job, by the way.

Then, all of a sudden, as the economy was getting better, the enemy hit us. And make no mistake about it, the attack of September the 11th affected not only our national psyche, it affected the economy. It hurt. It hurt people who were thinking about risking capital. It made it hard for people to find a job.

As well we had a problem that fall when it turned out some of our corporate citizens failed to live up to the responsibilities of leadership. They didn't tell the truth to their shareholders and their employees. That affected the psyche of the American investor. You know, capitalism is only as strong as the integrity of the people involved in the process. And these leaders will tell you that you've got to be open with your employees. Otherwise, they're not going to work for you very hard. In this case, these corporate criminals had a negative effect on the country.

And then, of course, I made some tough decisions about how to secure America and keep the peace by spreading freedom, and we marched to war. It is not conducive to economic growth to see on your TV screens, "America is marching to war." It's not a very positive, optimistic message to hear if you're thinking about risking capital. Who wants to take risk when we're marching to war?

Now we're marching to peace, and people feel more comfortable about making a risky investment. We've overcome a lot. And I'm optimistic because not only do I talk to people who are optimistic all the time; I'm optimistic because I recognized what this country has been through. It really speaks to the entrepreneurial spirit and ingenuity of the American people, is what I'm talking about. This is a fabulous country.

The system says if you work hard, you get rewarded. You can own your own business, hopefully without a lot of Government interference. Speaking about Government interference, we made a conscious decision to make Government less intrusive into the pocketbooks of the American people in order to effect economic growth. You might remember we went to the Congress, not only once but three different times, to effect real, substantial tax relief, tax relief which left more money in the pockets of the working people, tax relief which encouraged spending and saving and investment.

You see, we cut the taxes on everybody. We didn't try to pick and choose who got the tax relief. Our attitude was, if you pay taxes, you ought to get relief. It ought to be fair and simple to understand. And by the way, the tax relief had a significant impact on the entrepreneurial spirit of America because a lot of people who own their own small business pay taxes at the individual income tax rate. They're what you'll hear as a Subchapter S corp or a sole proprietorship. And so when you cut the taxes on the individuals, you're really cutting the taxes on business, small businesses. And after all, that's important, because most small businesses—or small businesses create the most new jobs. Seventy percent of new jobs are created by small-business owners and entrepreneurs. The tax relief was important.

We had incentives in there for people trying to raise a family by raising the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. Heck, we want a Tax Code that encourages marriage, not discourages marriage. It doesn't make any sense to say, "If you're married, you get to pay more tax."

We gave small-business owners incentives to invest by raising the deductibility limits. And I think you'll hear some discussion of that today. We reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains, which was particularly important for retired citizens who rely upon dividend income to—in their latter years.

So we did a lot. We've done a lot. And I'm telling you, the tax relief came at the right time and made a big difference for economic growth.

There's more to do. First of all, every one of these business leaders and owners will tell you that if there's uncertainty in the Tax Code, it will make it difficult for them to plan for the future. Businessowners like certainty. They want to know what the rules are.

Much of the tax relief I described goes away soon. Congress passed the tax relief, but they didn't make it permanent. Job creation is vital. Permanency in the Tax Code will mean more job creation. Congress must make every part of the tax package permanent.

These business leaders will tell you, health care costs are rising and are difficult to manage. We need association health care plans to allow small businesses to pool the risk across jurisdictional boundaries. Congress must act. We need medical liability reform. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the costs of health care. They affect the budgets of these small businesses. They also affect the Federal budget. I mean, if you think about what frivolous lawsuits do to the cost of Medicare and Medicaid and veterans' health benefits, you understand what I'm talking about. I mean, it's an enormous cost to the Federal budget. We got a good bill out of the House. The medical liability bill is stuck in the Senate. We need tort reform there; we need class action reform; we need asbestos reform if we expect this economy to continue to grow.

We need an energy policy. Congress needs to give me an energy bill. I mean, it's hard for businesses to plan, particularly in the manufacturing sector, if you're wondering where you're going to get your next watt of energy. And so we need an energy bill. Congress needs to act. Congress needs to join this administration in listening to the voices of these entrepreneurs to figure out how to keep a progrowth agenda on the forefront. So long as anybody is looking for a job in America, this administration is going to be promoting a progrowth, pro-entrepreneurial agenda.

And I'm honored to be joined by entrepreneurs, strong, strong women who have taken the lead in their businesses and are providing a great service to our country. They're not only providing a wonderful example for people who are wondering whether or not I can own my own company but whether—but providing the service of hiring people and keeping them at work and caring about their employees.

I'm going to start off by Nancy Connolly. She is the president and CEO of Lasertone Corporation, Littleton, Massachusetts. Welcome.

[*At this point, Ms. Connolly made brief remarks.*]

The President. Yes, see, Nancy hires 20—there's a lot of companies the size of Nancy's around the country that have got this sense of optimism. I mean it's—I don't think we would have had Nancy sitting here 2 years ago saying, "Gosh, I look forward to hiring 20." I suspect she might have been saying, "I hope to keep the 70." A lot of small businesses were just hanging on to what they had during tough economic times. And now this leader and this entrepreneur are saying, "20 minimum," it sounded like to me. And that's how this economy works. It's very important for people to understand it's the cumulative effect of many, many hirings that take place on a daily basis, particularly in the small-business sector, that affect economic growth and vitality.

Thank you for doing what you're doing.

Catherine, tell us about yourself and your business, Knowledge Information Solutions.

[*Catherine Giordano, president and chief executive officer, Knowledge Information Solutions, Inc., Virginia Beach, VA, made brief remarks.*]

The President. I'm glad you're here, Catherine, thanks. One of the things I think is very interesting for people to understand that Catherine just said—she said the tax breaks that we focused for small-business owners caused her to buy new equipment and new software. Well, somebody has to make that equipment, and somebody has to design that software and sell it. So my point is, is that it's important for our American citizens to understand the ripple effect of good tax policy. Good tax policy encourages an owner to make a decision. That decision then makes it more likely somebody else is going to find a job who will provide—in the company that provides the product—in Catherine's case, equipment and hardware.

It's very important that this incentive stay in place because it is—you just heard one example of the decisionmaking process that takes place as a result of good tax policy. If the tax policy—if Congress lets this lapse, the ability to deduct to $100,000 of capital equipment, it would then cause her to make different decisions in the out-years. And so the

Congress needs to be mindful of what tax policy does to the decisionmakers, the job creators, people like Catherine who made a rational decision based upon good policy.

It's my honor to welcome right now—why don't we go with Sharon Evans. Sharon is the CEO of CFJ Manufacturing, Fort Worth, Texas.

[*Ms. Evans made brief remarks and concluded by saying that she anticipated 25-percent growth next year which she believed was due to tax benefits.*]

The President. I disagree. I think it's related to vision and hard work and the Texas spirit. The tax relief helped, but none of these women should discount their courage and their vision and their willingness to take risk and to make wise decisions.

Ms. Evans. I do have to commend you too, as well as—we utilize and we are a certified women-owned business, and your support of women in business has increased my customer base, which has, in fact, grown my business as well.

The President. Yes, I think it's very important—what she's talking about is contracting. For example, at the Federal Government, we ought to bust these contracts down to smaller sizes. The role of contracting at the Federal level—the proper role of contracting obviously is to get good service for the Government but at the same time have the added dividend of enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit, is encouraging small-business ownership, is to really achieve what we want to achieve, and that is to expand the ownership society in America.

And by the way, the role of Government is not to create wealth but the environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish. Make no mistake about it, the role of Government is to create the architecture in which people are willing to take risk and make choice. But that doesn't happen unless somebody's got a good idea, works hard, dreams big, treats their employees with respect, and is capable. So thank you for giving Government the credit, but we don't deserve it.

Let me call upon Maria Coakley David. She is the CFO of C.J. Coakley, Inc., right here in Falls Church, Virginia. Thanks for coming, Maria. And thank you for the hat.

[*Ms. Coakley David made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, let me talk about job hiring, particularly in the construction field. It's very important for these companies to understand who they're hiring. I'm excited about the fact that you're expanding your job base. I just want to make sure that you stay legal in your hiring practice. And we've got a problem here——

Ms. Coakley David. It's a big concern as well for us, and I appreciate you bringing that up.

The President. It's got to be a big concern. Well, I'm talking about this immigration issue that I brought up. My attitude is, any time an employer can't find an American worker to do the job, that—in this case, she ought to be able to hire a willing foreign worker, so long as that foreign worker has got a—we're going to issue a new card, a temporary-worker card.

I don't like the idea of having an undocumented economy in the greatest country on the face of the Earth, where people walk miles across deserts at the hands of sometimes these "coyote" border smugglers who treat these people inhumanely. They get into our society. They're doing work, but they're doing work in an undocumented way, not aboveboard but below the surface. They can get exploited and have no recourse. And it's just flat wrong in America. And we ought to recognize the system hasn't worked.

And so I proposed a plan that is a worker plan. It is not an automatic path to citizenship, what they call amnesty. It is a plan that recognizes reality in a commonsense way, so that when Maria's company starts expanding and she can't find somebody to lay tar on a hot August day and somebody else wants to because they've got a family to feed, she can find this person, and the person will show up to work. And by the way, that person ought to be able to go back to his or her family without being harassed, to be able to take money home, which is what they're trying to do.

So this is a commonsense plan. It makes eminent sense. It recognizes the reality of today's workplace. We want our employers to be aggressive at hiring people, but we don't want them breaking the law. And we've got to recognize, in this society, there are

just simply some jobs that are not being filled by American citizens.

Ms. Coakley David. You're correct, and it is definitely a big concern for our company. We probably have 70 percent Hispanic workforce. We've recently hired a bilingual receptionist to help us communicate effectively. We have a lot of our newsletters translated in Spanish. And we do have to face the facts, and we would greatly benefit from your plan.

The President. Yes, this is important. The other thing what she's faced with—first of all, the fact that you've got a Hispanic workforce means you're doing well. These are fine people, we know well in Texas. They're great people—great people.

But there's a lot of false documentation. What kind of society is it where the system allows for false documentation, falsifying these different papers so Maria is not sure whether or not she's dealing with somebody she ought to be dealing with? We need to make this aboveboard. And by the way, it is humane to treat people with respect, citizen or not citizen. We want to treat people with the utmost respect in this country. This is America. It's the greatest country on the face of the Earth. We're not giving special privilege. They don't get to butt in line where somebody who wants to go through the process in a legal way. We're just recognizing reality in a commonsensical way. It's the right thing to do.

[*Ms. Coakley David made additional remarks.*]

The President. You know, one of the most meaningful things that's happened to me since I've been the Governor—the President—Governor—President. [*Laughter*] Oops—[*laughter*]—ex-Governor. I went to Bethesda Naval Hospital to give a fellow a Purple Heart, and at the same moment watched him—get a Purple Heart for action in Iraq—and at that same—right after I gave him the Purple Heart, he was sworn in as a citizen of the United States, a Mexican citizen now a United States citizen.

It's a pretty special country, isn't it, where people are willing to come not only to work to provide for their families but to wear this Nation's uniform and to go into harm's way for our peace and security. And Americans have got to recognize how special America is, and how lucky we are to be Americans in this country, and how a lot of really decent people would like to join us. We've just got to make sure the system is orderly and fair and meets national objectives.

Lurita—Lurita Doan is with us. She is the president and CEO of New Technology Management in Reston, Virginia. Welcome.

[*Ms. Doan made brief remarks.*]

The President. I'm here to thank you all. I think the—I hope you come away with the same sense of optimism I do about the future of this country when you hear these five women speak. I mean, this is a country which speaks to five entrepreneurs here on the stage and says, "Dream big and go for it. Live your dream." Can you imagine a country where a woman like Lurita walks in to Kinko's and says, "I think I'll start a business by printing my first business card," and here she is, 13 years later, speaking to the Nation about a business which is thriving and is going to hire 75 new people.

It's a fabulous country, where people can dream big dreams and people can risk—take risk and achieve their dreams through hard work, clear vision, and a good idea. It's hard to be a small-business owner, particularly in hard times. It's easier when the whole economy is growing, but it's even hard then. It's hard to make the right decisions. But obviously, I'm surrounded by success, people who have been able to realize their dreams and accomplish what is not easy to accomplish.

Government can help, but we can't make these women smart; we can't make them dream; we can't make them compassionate. These are choices they've made. And our job is to stand with them and to serve as a wind at their back as they provide not only valuable goods and services but, more importantly for me right now and for the country, is to provide a chance for somebody to find work—find work so they can fulfill their obligations as a mom or a dad.

I want to thank you all for joining us. Thank you for being great Americans. I appreciate you helping me to explain how our economy works and why we should be optimistic about our future. May God bless your

endeavors and God bless you all. May God continue to bless our great country. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The discussion began at 10:45 a.m. at the Department of Commerce. In his remarks, the President referred to Secretary of Commerce Donald L. Evans.

Remarks to the National Catholic Educational Association

January 9, 2004

Welcome, please. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. [*Laughter*] Welcome to the people's house. We're glad you're here.

The last 100 years, the leadership of the National Catholic Education Association has been vital in advancing the work of Catholic schools around the Nation and, therefore, has been vital to the hopeful future of America. I'm honored to join you for celebrating your 100th anniversary. And this is a fitting place to celebrate the anniversary.

Catholic schools carry out a great mission, to serve God by building knowledge and character of our young people. It's a noble calling. It's an important part of the fabric of America. By teaching the Word of God, you prepare your students to follow a path of virtue and compassion and sacrifice for the rest of their lives. And by insisting on high standards for academic achievement, Catholic schools are a model for all schools around our country.

I was hoping to run into a fellow Texan today. [*Laughter*] His Excellency Gregory Aymond is the bishop from Austin, Texas. [*Laughter*] He is—I'm glad there's only a handful of Texans here. [*Laughter*] The bishop is the board chair of the National Catholic Education Association, and I want to thank you for joining us.

I appreciate Michael Guerra. Michael Guerra is the president of the National Catholic Education Association. Michael, thank you, and thank you for all the board members who graciously had a picture taken in the Blue Room with me. I appreciate you doing that.

His Excellency John Cummins, who is the bishop emeritus of Oakland, California, is with us. His Excellency, thank you for being here, sir.

I appreciate Carl Anderson, the Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, and Dorian for joining us today.

I'm sorry my neighbor His Eminence Theodore Cardinal McCarrick is not with us, a decent man. [*Laughter*] I really, really am proud to call him friend. He's a really good guy, as we say in Texas.

I appreciate you all coming. I really do. Thanks for being here.

Catholic educators share the basic conviction that every child can learn, and every child can learn to lead a life of service. That's a pretty good mission statement, isn't it? Let us teach every child to read and write and add and subtract, and as we do so, let us teach every child to serve a cause greater than self. The whole Nation benefits because of the good scholars and good citizens who graduate from Catholic schools. That is a fact.

Through your faith in every child—and I emphasize "every child"—Catholic schools have overcome challenges and experienced remarkable results. It is well known that Catholic schools operate on small budgets. [*Laughter*] The per-pupil cost in a Catholic school classroom is substantially below the per-pupil costs of many other schools, public or private.

And yet, the results are astonishing: 2.6 million students who attend Catholic schools will graduate—that's 99 percent—and almost all go to college. Even though the per-pupil expenditure per classroom is low, the results are extremely high. And it says something is going right—[*laughter*]—starting with the fact that Catholic schools have high expectations. You challenge what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. You believe in the worth of every person and every child. You believe that inherent in every child is the capacity to learn. And you refuse to quit on any child.

The Catholic schools understand that love and discipline go hand in hand. The Catholic schools are willing to change curriculum if it doesn't work. The Catholic schools sometimes meet longer hours than some would expect is the norm. Take LaSalle Academy, a Catholic school in Philadelphia. Students

attend classes from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the school year is several weeks longer than average. Whatever it takes to make sure no child is left behind, the Catholic schools do.

In addition to learning to read and write, students take courses in computers and music and art. At David McDonough, the principal of the school said this, "We bombard them"—that would be his students—[*laughter*]—"We bombard them with love, attention, and work, and they thrive."

An important part of the Catholic education is the commitment to serving what our society calls the disadvantaged student, regardless of religious affiliation. I appreciate that a lot. These are the students who sometimes in the public school system are deemed to be uneducable and, therefore, are just moved through the system. The Catholic schools have done our country a great service by a special outreach to minority children, who make up 26 percent of the enrollment of our Catholic schools. This is a great service to those children and their parents and our country.

Catholic schools have a proven record of bringing out the best in every child, regardless of their background. And every school in America should live up to that standard. We want our public schools to live up to the standard you have set in Catholic schools.

I signed what's called the No Child Left Behind Act. It is the most historic education reform in a generation. It actually passed with bipartisan support, which is unusual for Washington these days. [*Laughter*] Let me tell you a little bit about the philosophy behind the law, and I think you'll find it to be reminiscent.

First, the law assumes that every child can learn and, therefore, expects every child to learn. We've increased Federal spending and now, for the—at the Federal level, primarily for Title I students, many of whom would be—go to your schools, if they went to the—would be eligible for this program if they went to public schools, many of your students would be eligible for this program. But in return we now expect results. See, we believe every child can learn, and therefore, we're saying to States, "You must measure to show us whether a child has learned to read and write and add and subtract. And if not, let's solve the problem early, before it's too late."

In other words, we've introduced accountability into the system for the first time, insisted upon accountability, and then said, "Let's have enough money available to correct problems." And so now the States must test regularly, every year. And if the curriculum isn't working, you change it. And if it is working, there will be plenty of praise. If the math programs aren't working, change them, because we now expect results. Because like the Catholic schools, we believe in the worth of every child. We're challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations by raising the standard and refusing to accept the status quo when our children are not learning.

We've also done something different as well. We've insisted that these schools post results. It's an interesting phenomena to see a parent react when the expectation isn't met for a public school. In other words, everything may be fine, and all of a sudden the test scores are revealed and, oops, my school is not doing like I thought it was doing and, therefore, I, a parent, should become more involved in my child's school when I see failure.

But even beyond that, we've begun introducing to the system for the first time at the Federal level the capacity to take Federal money and spend that money in the private sector to get special tutorials. In other words, if a child is trapped in a school which is failing and won't change, after a reasonable period of time, there is some money that follows the child and the child can take that money, the parent can take that money and get his or her child additional tutoring—at a public facility, private charity, or at a Catholic school.

And so all of a sudden the No Child Left Behind Act not only demands accountability, but we've also started to empower parents to make additional choices for their child when the child is trapped into a school that won't change. And that includes, by the way, not only private tutoring but also a additional public school, a different—in other words, what we're trying to do is introduce parental involvement through accountability standards.

Parents, I believe—and I believe we ought to expand this opportunity further, which we're trying to do here in Washington, DC. And I want to describe to you right quick what this administration has done, where you can help a little bit in perhaps influencing the process, to begin what I think is a major reform.

As you know, the Government is responsible for much of the education in Washington, DC. And so working with people in Congress, we decided to expand on the spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act and introduce school choice here in Washington. Under this program the Federal Government would provide what's called scholarships to low-income families with children in under-performing schools—these families whose children clearly need better choices; if you're going to an under-performing school, you need a better choice—would receive a scholarship of up to $7,500, Federal money, to help meet the cost of tuition at any school of the parents' choice, a private school or a Catholic school, for that matter.

I suspect that this program would have a lot of takers when we can get it funded, because I think some parents, any parent, regardless of his or her income status, wants the best for their child. And when they begin to feel like the school isn't meeting the child's needs, it's just natural that they be looking for an alternative. The Catholic school system here in DC provides a really good alternative. And the Federal Government is now willing to help fund that alternative.

The good news is education is a priority in DC. The Mayor, a good fellow and a strong leader, recognizes the advantages of having a school choice program. Mayor Tony Williams is a strong supporter of the initiative we put forth on Capitol Hill. The House passed a bill that provides $14 million for this $7,500 per child scholarship program. It is a part of the Senate omnibus bill—that's what we call it, an omnibus bill—that has yet to be passed. The omnibus bill contains a lot of other parts of the appropriations process. The Senate is getting ready to come back into town. For the sake of educational excellence and for the sake of trusting parents to make the right decision for their children, for the sake, really, of helping to begin a change in education around the country, for the sake of helping the Catholic schools in the DC area fulfill their mission, meet their obligation, and to continue doing the excellent work they're doing, the Senate needs to pass this bill and make school choice in Washington, DC, a reality.

I want to build on this vital reform. I'm going to ask Congress to provide 50 million new dollars in this year's budget for what we call a national choice incentive fund. The program would award Federal grants to communities and organizations that help students, especially those from low-income families and those trapped in under-performing schools, to find a better education, become seed money for additional programs like the DC choice program I just described to you.

The initiative has a simple goal, yet it's a profound goal, to help more parents send their children to the school that is best for them, no matter what kind of school it is. When parents have more control over their children's education, children have a better chance to learn, schools have a better incentive to improve.

Much of what is behind the No Child Left Behind Act, the spirit and the philosophy of the No Child Left Behind Act, came from the examples set by the Catholic schools. It's a sense of what is possible. It is a sense that everybody has worth, that each soul matters. And therefore, we will not accept systems that just shuffle people through.

Everyone involved in the National Catholic Education Association can look back with pride over 100 years of excellence. And that's what we're here to celebrate today, 100 years of excellence. You are serving God by serving our children. You are making America a stronger and more compassionate country, one child at a time. Congratulations and thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Bishop Gregory J. Aymond of Austin, TX; Dorian Anderson, wife of Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus; and Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, DC. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title

I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Memorandum on the Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative

January 9, 2004

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: The Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative

The cost of Federal workplace injuries, when measured by workers' compensation losses, is more than $2 billion and 2 million lost production days annually. In fiscal year 2003, the Federal workforce of almost 2.7 million filed more than 168,000 injury claims. Behind these numbers lie pain and suffering by workers and their families. Clearly, Government agencies should strive to do more to improve workplace safety and health and reduce the costs of injury to workers and taxpayers. Many workplace injuries are preventable.

Therefore, I am establishing SHARE: Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment Initiative, a safe workplace initiative for fiscal years 2004–2006. The initiative's four goals cover the most important elements of a strong safety and health management program: lower workplace injury and illness case rates, lower lost-time injury and illness case rates, timely reporting of injuries and illnesses, and fewer lost days resulting from work injuries and illnesses. The Secretary of Labor will lead the SHARE Initiative and will measure the performance of each department and agency against the goals. I direct all executive branch departments and agencies to participate in SHARE for this 3-year period.

Each department and agency will collaborate with the Department of Labor to establish challenging annual goals based on its current performance in the four areas. The Department of Labor will measure and track agency performance, and will report to me annually on each agency's progress towards meeting its goals. The Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Office of Workers' Compensation Programs will also work with Federal departments and agencies to develop new workplace strategies to improve safety and health at high injury rate sites, assist them in improving the timeliness of reporting claims through electronic and other means, and guide them in providing suitable work and tools for injured and disabled employees.

Federal supervisors and managers must focus management tools and resources on eliminating unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. Federal employees should be encouraged to perform their jobs safely, effectively, and alertly to remain injury-free. Dedication to ensuring our Government workforce family is safe and healthy preserves the resources of Government and helps promote the delivery of Government services to the American people.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

January 3

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

January 5

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to congratulate the Afghan Government on the adoption of a constitution and to discuss the war on terror and the Kandahar-Kabul highway. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President-elect Oscar Berger of Guatemala to congratulate him on his electoral victory and to discuss Guatemala-U.S. relations.

Later in the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to St. Louis, MO, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Jeff Tank. Later, in the library of Pierre Laclede Elementary School, he visited with fourth graders.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

January 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation from the Oval Office with NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe to congratulate NASA on the successful landing of the Mars Exploration Rover Spirit on Mars.

The President announced his intention to appoint Andrew B. Maner as Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Homeland Security.

January 7

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President attended a Republican National Committee luncheon at the historic Evermay house in northwest Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to appoint Linda Mysliwy Conlin as a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

The President announced his intention to appoint Charles Johnson as Chief Financial Officer of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to appoint Stephen L. Johnson as Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to appoint Gerard Schwartz as a member of the National Council on the Arts.

January 8

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia to congratulate him on Colombia's recent successes against narcoterrorism and to discuss the Special Summit of the Americas to be held January 12-13 in Monterrey, Mexico. He then had a telephone conversation with President Lucio Gutierrez Borbua of Ecuador to discuss cooperation against terrorism and the upcoming summit.

Later in the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Knoxville, TN, where, upon arrival, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Nathaniel Foster. Later, at West View Elementary School, he visited with schoolchildren.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Palm Beach Gardens, FL, where, upon arrival at Palm Beach International Airport, he greeted USA Freedom Corps volunteer Gordon Stanley.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

January 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and later met with the National Security Council. Later, he met with U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad to discuss progress in Afghanistan.

In the afternoon, at DAR Constitution Hall, the President made remarks to Federal agency leadership and Senior Executive Service employees.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain to the White House for a meeting on January 14, and that President and Mrs. Bush will host a dinner for President and Mrs. Aznar later that evening.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland to the White House on January 26.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to the White House on January 28.

The President announced his appointment of Matthew Kirk as Deputy Assistant for Legislative Affairs-Senate.

The President announced his intention to appoint Mark Anthony Carter, John Gilbert Cruz, and Grace Flores-Hughes as members

of the Federal Service Impasses Panel at the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released January 5

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released January 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released January 7

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: Fair and Secure Immigration Reform

Released January 8

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Fact sheet: President Celebrates 2nd Anniversary of No Child Left Behind Act

Released January 9

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice on the President's upcoming visit to Mexico

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of President Jose Maria Aznar of Spain

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of President Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey to Washington

Fact sheet: America's Economy on the Path to Recovery

Acts Approved by the President

NOTE: No acts approved by the President were received by the Office of the Federal Register during the period covered by this issue.

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